Recreating the Village through Community Spirit and Respect of the Planet

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Frequently asked questions

For the purposes of this document, we shall refer to Mount Warning Eco Village as 'MWEV'.

This document has been drafted by the original steering committee to answer many of the frequently asked questions. We hope that it provides you with all that you need to make the decision to go to the next step.

Should you have any questions that are still left unanswered, we shall be only too pleased to assist.

About 'Community' (Common Unity)

What is an intentional community?

We have a document known as the '10 reasons to create community' available on this website. Would suggest that you read this document as it outlines our intentions quite well.

Is this some kind of 'Cult'?

Absolutely not. This is a non-sectarian Community. All are welcome to apply who are willing to follow three simple principals;

1) Do no harm
2) Respect the earth
3) Love your fellow man/woman

How This Project Began

Who and how did this project start?

The Founders of MWEV are Peter Van Lieshout, Mark Darwin, Adrian Brennock and Phillip Dixon. Mark, Adrian and Phillip have been business partners in previous ventures, including the establishment of a previous Community known as Bhula Bhula. In 2015 Bhula Bhula purchased almost 650 acres right next door to MWEV. This community is now unencumbered and almost fully subscribed. The trio learned a great deal about what works, and what doesn't work in establishing intentional communities.

During the set up phase of Bhula Bhula, Peter contacted Mark to discuss creating a similar project on his surrounding 3,500 acres. From there, and after more than 12 months of discussions, MWEV was formed.

The four Founders share a common goal to establish Australia's leading intentional community that demonstrates how we can still live together in harmony with nature, the seasons, authorities, and each other as human beings.

Since then, and through drawing upon others within Bhula Bhula and abroad, they have formed a 'Steering Committee' to assist in the launch of this ground breaking project.

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What exactly does the 'Steering Committee' mean?

The group of people responsible for the initial works necessary to get this huge project off the ground. The list of works are, but not limited to;

1. The formation of the Steering Committee itself,
2. Creation of Mission Statement,
3. Creation of the 'Offer' to incoming parties,
4. The assistance with the drafting of Legal documents such as the Company Constitution, Trust Deeds, By-Laws and so forth,
5. Seeking of the rest of the parties (families/groups) to form the entire community,
6. Assessing information about town planning,
7. Investigating Council guidelines etc,
8. Water management,
9. Power,
10. Plot allotments,
11. Conflict resolution and Arbitration processes,
12. Consultation with Gunham Badi and local Origine elders,

These functions are now being formed into various sub-committee groups;

LEGAL

- internal and external dispute resolution
- legal
- financial
- building standards
- dealing with local authorities

MARKETING

- sales and marketing
- commercial area
- communications and meetings
- IT

SERVICES

- environment
- energy
- water management
- waste removal

OH&S

- security and visitors
- fire & safety
- health

URBAN PLANNING

-homesteads

-education

-community centre

-healing centre

-roads and fencing

-farming/brewing(?)

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- coordination of other committees
- preparing reports for the AGM and monthly/quarterly meetings etc.

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The Property

Where is the property?

The property is situated in between the gorgeous towns of Uki and Nimbin at Mount Burrell. This is in the lush area known as the Mount Warning caldera in Northern New South Wales. The exact address is kept private, but will obviously be disclosed to those who complete an 'Expression of Interest' form and wish to inspect the property.

Is there water on the property?

Yes, the property borders the fresh water section of the Tweed River and also lovely sections of Byrrill Creek. The property boasts several good quality dams, one is over 800 metres in length. There are waters holes, one in particular on Byrrill Creek is nothing short of spectacular (see photo gallery). There is also the possibility of drilling for water, which many neighbouring properties have done very successfully. Rainfall in this area is also very sound.

Are there roads on the property?

There are many roads that virtually cross section the land, and are of good quality for dirt roads. The minor roadways may need some work in areas in the short term, whereas the main roadways have already been costed out to be bitumen over a 4 year period. There is also a $2M bridge going in to cover the main access over the Tweed River.

Is there power on the land?

There is mains power to the industrial shed in the middle of the property which includes 3 phase power for heavy machinery, and also to some homesteads that will be occupied by on site managers etc. It is the view of the Steering Committee that homes will generate their own power, but whether that is done as a group, or whether everyone will all be responsible for their own power is still on the table for research and discussion.

Will there be a 'Community Centre'?

Yes, most certainly. We see a functional community centre as being a vital part of this community. It will provide many things such as a meeting place, a good quality kitchen, wood fired oven and conventional ovens/stoves, areas to hold functions, swimming pool, gymnasium etc. Our research to date indicates that virtually all successful communities have a great Community Centre and regular social activities.

Is there a fire management plan?

Yes there will most certainly be a fire management plan, including sufficient water in dams, and an escape plan should the situation warrant it. As part of the DA there is an extensive fire plan being supplied by Peter Thornton from BPAD (Bushfire Planning and Design) who are certified bushfire experts.

Financials

How is this project initially being funded?

As with any land development, there is a component that purchases the land, and a component for works such as roads and services etc. This project is different in that there is a very large component that goes not only towards areas like roads, but also parks, community gardens, community centre(s), acquisition of equipment such as tractors, sheds, timber mills, etc. Generally speaking, only half of the 'buy-in' price is for the land, and the balance is for community works.

Will there be any further funding required?

Possibly, but only by due process of voting and Agreement by the community as a whole, and in line with the voting policies in the Company Constitution and/or By-Laws. It is envisaged that any further funding would be generated by the endeavours of the Community, and that there are no loans or mortgages on the land, leaving it open to the energy of abundance, not debt.

Will there be any ongoing costs, such as levies to cover Council rates, power, maintenance etc.?

The general philosophy of the Founders is that human beings shouldn't have to pay to live on planet earth. The harsh realities are that we must buy into the real estate, but our goal is to then have all other costs usually associated with living on land, such as Council rates, maintenance, upgrades etc ought to all be generated by the project itself (for example the 600 acres of Blackbutt Forestry etc), and it's other investment interests, such as part ownership in the Mount Burrell commercial precinct, the Nimbin Quarry, and so forth…..

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Legal Aspects

Who are the advisors handling the community affairs?

Below is the list of advisors that have been carefully selected as the very best in their field for this project;

Advisors:

Wall and Co Lawyers Wroth Wall	02 6684 1080
Cooper Grace Ward Lawyers Scott Hay-Bartlem	07 3231 2458
McMahon Clarke Lawyers Sean McMahon	07 3239 2915
Heydons Lawyers Quentin Proctor	02 6685 6188
Modoras Accountants Peter Hetherington	07 5570 6150
Darryl Anderson Consulting Darryl Anderson	07 5523 3611
Artis Architecture/ Aria Property Aimee Chamoun (nee Forrester)	07 3226 0111
Vincent Chartered Accountants Ian McKinnon	07 5531 0454

What is the Legal structure for the MWEV Community?

The project is operated through a Pty Ltd company known as Mount Warning Eco Village (MWEV) which then has 16 subsidiary companies, being one for each Land Title. The companies are governed and managed by the Constitution and internal By-Laws, and all subsidiary companies are governed by the head company being MWEV Pty Ltd

What exactly am I buying?

Your investment will be the purchase of shares in the subsidiary company that owns the specific Land Title that your chosen private use section of land occupies.

How does that work from an ongoing management perspective?

The project is managed through the Directors and the Steering Committee. The company will have 3-5 Directors who after the initial 12 months will be voted in by the Share Holders in the Company. All of this finer detail will be available through the Company Constitution. It is envisaged that the Directors will change (or at least be voted on) every 12 months.

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Can I sell my Shares in the future?

Yes. There will of course be a process as stipulated in the Company Constitution and/or By-Laws whereby an approval structure for incoming parties will take effect. This will not be overly prohibitive, simply a measure of protection for the existing members in the community. You will be free to negotiate whatever price you can between the incoming party, taking into effect any capital improvements you may or may not have made to your allotment.

What are the options for the purchase of these Shares? Can I purchase them in my own name, a Trust, a Company, or a Foundation etc?

This question is still being discussed with the Lawyers. The community as a whole must ensure that it isn't put under threat by external entities, such as Bankruptcy Trustees, MIP or Government authorities and so forth. Once we have further clarification on this, we will notify all concerned. At this point in time, and after brief discussions with the Lawyers, our preference would be that the Units are purchased by a fresh Trust, Company or of course in your own name.

What are the plans for seeking Council approval?

The entire project has been planned using local Town Planning group DAC (Darryl Anderson Consulting). Darryl was a former Town Planner within Tweed Shire Council, and as such has a high level of knowledge and experience in what will pass and be functional. One of the Founders, Phillip Dixon, is a Civil Engineer, and he works very closely with DAC and the Tweed Shire Council.

Can I borrow using the Shares as security?

No. This project is to remain unencumbered, other than the initial loan made privately between the early community members in the short term. Should there be any projects in the future that require funding, for instance the possible 'Health Retreat', then this would be carefully researched and presented to the community for voting and approval. This doesn't mean that you cannot borrow from other means, using other collateral as security, or by personal loans. This is entirely your business, but the Units are to remain unencumbered.

How will the individual Blocks be allocated?

There is an internal map with lot allocations as specified by Council. Lots are chosen, as with most developments, in a timely fashion, in other words, as people purchase their Share, they select their lot. There have been approximately 311 lots allocated, and they will vary in price in line with their position.

What size blocks are we being allotted?

At this juncture each party will have approximately 1 hectare (2.47 acres) for their private use. If the full quota of 311 lots are secured, then this means that approximately 770 acres of the 3,500 acres will be for Private use, and the balance will be for orchards, recreational areas, playgrounds, farming, community centre(s) and so forth.

The Building of Dwellings

Are there any restrictions on what I can build?

Yes. All dwellings will need to be of suitable quality so as to ensure safety standards are met. (We are aiming for Australian Building Standards as a minimum). The design and layout of the structure and its location on the block will be up to each individual. We are very open to 'alternative' style dwellings such as Earth-ships, Shipping container Homes and so forth, however, safety and other aspects are important as well. All dwellings will need to be passed by Council in terms of safety etc.

Are there any restrictions on when I must build?

No. We understand that some parties will be engaging in building as soon as possible, whilst others might be 2-3 years in the future. This is fine, and probably quite practical as well.

Are there any restrictions on how many dwellings I can build?

A. No, for uninhabited sheds and agricultural structures.
B. Yes for Inhabited structures. The agreed number of dwellings allowed (without community special approval) is still yet undecided. The Plot of land is yours to do with as you wish, so as long as safety standards are met then you can design your home the way you like and it is envisioned that most plots can have a number of separate dwellings on the block. The Constitution and By-Laws will deal more specifically with this point. However, it must be said that the feeling amongst the group to date is that one main dwelling only be applicable for living in. For example, it is not acceptable to build a block of 6 flats and rent them all out.

Is there a preference as to what we build?

Yes. Eco Friendly and as green as possible is the standard we would like to see. Earth-ships and other alternative examples are some of the designs people have talked about building.

Vehicles

Is it necessary to have a 4WD to live on this land?

Not necessarily. All roads on the property will be built and maintained to a high standard (not all will be sealed) and all residential and communal areas will be accessible by standard vehicles over time. Having said that, the roads will take quite some time before they are upgraded to all points on the land. Also, from time to time the area can experience heavy tropical rains, and as with any rural area, caution ought to be taken where necessary. So in the first 4-5 years, we believe a 4WD is sensible.

Are there any restrictions on how many cars per allotment?

No. Not at this stage, however a detailed policy will be documented within the community's By-Laws, so as to stop the community from becoming a car park or car grave yard.

Are there noise restrictions? For example the use of trail bikes and/or quads and other recreational vehicles?

Yes. Typical 'traditional' standards of noise restrictions, levels and times will be documented in the By-Laws and will be for the benefit of all who reside in the Community. There is a plan to build a trail bike track, but this will be determined by the community in time, and will of course be earmarked for an area as far from homes as possible. It has been discussed that the Community may purchase 10-12 electric style trail bikes that community members can simply book online for use, with clear guidelines for cleaning etc. in place.

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Revenue Generation for the Community

How will the Community pay its ongoing expenses?

It is the intention of the Founders to create a situation whereby nobody should have to pay to live at MWEV. This will be realised by the many commercial enterprises gazetted for launch, as well as the MWEV owning part shares in the Mount Burrell commercial precinct, and the Nimbin Quarry. There are a multitude of commercial businesses that can create revenue for the community, for example the 600 acres of ever maturing Blackbutt Forests, leasing arrangements with entities such as Outward Bound, honey, horse riding, proposed 'health retreat' etc…

General Expectations

What is expected of a member of the community?

~ DO NO HARM ~

The fundamental rule of the community. All of the 'formal' requirements will also be set out in the By-Laws/Shareholders' Agreement and the Company Constitutions. It is expected that a level of genuine 'Community' feeling will exist between all of those who reside on the land, and taking an active part in community exercises and meetings is an important part of the decision to invite you on to the block. There is no desire to 'live in each others pockets' or to be 'communal free loving hippies' by any means, but an active group mentality is vital for those times that it is required. Community = Common Unity and there are many common goals and values that we all share. Fostering and supporting processes that allow us to grow as a group is the primary focus of this project.

Conflict Resolution and Arbitration Processes.

Is there a formal process in place for the inevitable conflicts that will arise?

Yes. A very detailed process is being written and included into the community By-Laws. It is envisaged that processes like NVC (non-violent Communication) or such like be adopted and embraced by the Community. Should disputes not be resolved by the parties, there may be the need to use the services of an Agreed Mediator/Arbitrator to ensure that conflicts are given the best chance to be resolved.

Can I work from home if I currently operate a small business?

Yes. There are no restrictions on 'working from home', unless it is that you operate a 'services' business. (i.e Your Clientele come to your home.) The residential part of the community will only be accessible to the people that are living there, and their guests of course. It is proposed that the Community Centre may have professional suites and consultation rooms, for those who wish to see clients on the property.

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Sewerage

Will each block have Sewerage facilities ?

The plan so far is that each site will be completely responsible for its own waste in this regard. There are many great options available these days, for example the Clivus Multrum System of a composting nature works brilliantly, and is in fact approved by Queensland State Forests and used on areas such as Fraser Island whereby it leaves a zero footprint.

http://www.clivusmultrum.com.au

Garbage

What about weekly rubbish collection ?

Yes. No. Maybe. This topic and all options are currently being considered and we have engaged a town planner in conjunction with us to review all possible viable scenarios for the community as a whole, (one main Green plant on site) and also as individuals (Each dwelling having its own facilities or a combination of both).

Pets

Can you have pets and are there any restrictions?

Ywes. Pets are allowed, with no restrictions envisioned at this time, other than typical standards of acceptable behaviour that will be detailed within the By-Laws. Dogs will be required to be adequately housed, as when dogs (even domesticated dogs) get together in a 'pack' formation, it can and does at times cause problems for livestock, and children.

Superannuation

Can I use my Superannuation to buy in?

The short answer is yes, but this is specific to your own situation. We cannot and will not offer any legal or financial advice, and would encourage you to seek this areas of expertise. We do have members who are setting up their own SMSF (Self Managed Super Fund) and if you don't have any advisors that you use regularly, we would be more than happy to supply you with a few to choose from that we have had great reports from in the past.

Vendor Finance

Does MWEV offer any kind of Vendor Terms for those who just can't raise the entire amount upfront?

Yes, to approved applicants. At MWEV we want this project to be achievable to everyone who has the true desire to be part of this amazing project. This isn't always going to be possible of course, but we are happy to sit and discuss a portion of the acquisition price to be offered on Vendor Terms. As a guide, this amount would seldom exceed 50% of the usual purchase price for the shares, and would generally be required to be repaid over a terms not exceeding 10 years.

Summary

This document has been prepared in good faith, but carries with it no responsibility or liability whatsoever by the current Community Members. It is simply a working document that outlines our thoughts and aspirations to date, and all of these points and many more will be properly and legally detailed in the various documents such as the Company Constitution, Trust Deeds, and By-Laws.